



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 19 July 2021

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/21/3271460

45 Putnoe Heights, Bedford MK41 8EB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Myrtle Hare against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02126/OUT, dated 22 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is new single chalet bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal proposal is for outline planning permission with all detailed matters reserved for future approval. Whilst not formally part of the scheme, I have treated any details submitted with the appeal application relating to matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale as a guide to how the site might be developed.
3. As set out under Article 5(3) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, where access is a reserved matter, the application for outline planning permission must state the area or areas where access points to the development proposed will be situated. The submitted plans¹ confirm that access to the proposed chalet bungalow would be provided via an existing pedestrian footpath that offers a direct connection between the northern part of the appeal site and Putnoe Heights. I shall consider the appeal on this basis.
4. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. The main parties to this appeal have had the opportunity to comment upon any relevance of this to the outcome of the appeal.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - The effect upon the character and appearance of the area; and
 - The effect upon highway safety, having particular regard to the intended parking arrangements.

¹ both referenced BD136666

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal property (No 45) is comprised of a semi-detached bungalow. It is located within a predominantly residential area where a variety of different house types and property sizes are in place. Nevertheless, properties tend to be setback from the highway and to occupy plots that are generously sized and often well-vegetated. When also acknowledging the presence of Bowhill Park (the Park), the area local to the site can be observed to have a green and spacious residential character and appearance.
7. The proposal involves the sub-division of the site and would lead to the creation of two separate tightly dimensioned plots. Indeed, through the provision of a new dwelling, the scheme would erode the spaciousness currently provided by the predominantly undeveloped grounds of No 45. Thus, a new chalet bungalow, even if to be designed to reflect neighbouring built form, would appear as an unduly cramped form of development discordant with its often green and spacious surroundings.
8. I have noted reference to the existence of trees both on-site and close by within the Park, which, it has been suggested, would shield the new dwelling. However, planting cannot be relied upon to provide a solid or impenetrable buffer to views. This is not least due to it being ever evolving and reliant upon continual maintenance to retain a consistent form. In any event, the new dwelling would be visible from a range of publicly accessible vantage points and would have a negative influence upon how the local area would be read and experienced (most particularly by close by residential occupiers).
9. The potential for No 45 to be extended as an alternative to the appeal proposal has been referenced. However, any suggestion that an extension would have the same impact as a new dwelling has not been substantiated. Moreover, any possible scheme to extend No 45 would not involve a sub-division of the site.
10. For the above reasons, the scheme would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal conflicts with Policies 29 and 30 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (adopted January 2020) (the Local Plan) in so far as these policies require development proposals to have a positive relationship with the surrounding area, integrating well with and complementing the character of the area in which the development is located.

Highway safety

11. Consistent with the submitted plans and the nature of the intended access point, future occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be reliant upon on-street parking. Indeed, no off-street provision is intended, and the appellant has not asserted otherwise.
12. The Council's residential parking standards, as set out in the Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities Supplementary Planning Document (2014) (the SPD), require that a minimum number of vehicle spaces are provided to serve new dwellings based on the number of bedrooms intended. At this outline stage the number of bedrooms has yet to be finalised. Nevertheless, the SPD indicates that at least one additional space should be provided and sets out that any exception to the minimum standards must be accompanied by strong evidence.

13. I note here that an additional dwelling would reasonably be anticipated to generate increased parking demand when compared to a possible future scheme to extend No 45 (the potential details of which have not been provided).
14. Various photographs of local streets appear within the appellant's appeal submission. These were taken on a weekday in March 2021 and have been submitted in the interests of seeking to demonstrate that plenty of unrestricted on-street parking opportunities exist. However, the photographs provide only selected snapshots of the current situation and do not make up part of a formal/structured parking survey. I also note that parking demand upon residential streets would be unlikely to be at its highest during early/mid-afternoon hours, when I understand the appellant's photographs were taken.
15. Furthermore, notwithstanding the appellant's assertions to the contrary, interested parties have referenced instances of heavy parking along Putnoe Heights and/or raised concerns in a parking context. Upon my own inspection, I observed multiple vehicles parked in proximity to the site and experienced Putnoe Heights to be of narrow width and curving alignment. To my mind, suitably strong evidence has not been provided to demonstrate that the scheme's reliance upon on-street parking would not prejudice highway safety and/or the free flow of traffic.
16. Thus, in the absence of robust evidence to demonstrate that the intended non-provision of additional parking is acceptable, I find that the scheme would prejudice highway safety having particular regard to the intended parking arrangements and would thus cause harm. The proposal conflicts with Policy 31 of the Local Plan and with the SPD in so far as this policy and guidance require that particular attention be given to parking provision.

Other Matters

17. For the avoidance of doubt, I am satisfied that the new dwelling would be suitably accessible from a fire safety perspective. Furthermore, bin and cycle storage arrangements do not need to be finalised at this outline stage and a detailed assessment of the proposed chalet bungalow's effects in a neighbouring living conditions context would be most appropriately undertaken at reserved matters stage.
18. In terms of the scheme's benefits, it is the case that an additional residential unit is proposed in an urban location where the principle of residential development is typically supported. Indeed, the Framework reaffirms the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. Nevertheless, one additional unit would not make a noticeable difference to the Borough-wide housing supply situation and is a benefit that attracts limited weight.
19. The proposal's implementation would lead to an existing concrete pad (the pad) no longer offering the potential to be accessible for the purposes of parking. Access to the pad can theoretically be attained via a dropped kerb located to the opposite side of the Park. However, formal rights of access have not been clearly evidenced and I witnessed nothing during my visit to indicate that the pad has been actively used for parking purposes in recent times. For these reasons, I attach limited weight to any potential safety benefit offered through a possible reduction in vehicular movements across the Park.

20. The contributions associated with the proposal, when considered in cumulative terms, would be modest and would not outweigh the harms and associated policy conflicts that I have identified. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

21. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR